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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [MASS](#) [SNAR](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: GOE REVIEWS MILITARY COOPERATION WITH USG

REF: A. QUITO 327

[1](#)B. QUITO 331
[1](#)C. QUITO 353

Classified By: Ambassador Linda Jewell for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: New Minister of Defense Javier Ponce declared on April 12 that the Defense Ministry will review cooperation with the USG to avoid adverse influence, while Ecuadorian military officials continued to privately communicate the need for continued cooperation. Recent changes in leadership and direction will likely prove most unsettling to USG cooperation in the intelligence arena, at least in the near term. Effects on our longer-term military cooperation may prove less dramatic than the initial rhetoric. (End Summary)

Cooperation with USG "Under Review"

[1](#)2. (SBU) Minister of Defense (MOD) Ponce announced on April 12 that cooperative agreements with the USG would be reviewed. On April 15, the MOD repeated this mantra and added that the alleged influence of the USG (Refs A and B) was not simply a problem of two or three officials that might have ties, rather that it was the "agreements, seminars, courses, and training methods, that have resulted in a strategy that does not necessarily respond to national interests." The MOD added that it was evident that the U.S. had influence over all facets of Ecuador's security sector, and that it was necessary to curtail and balance this influence. Ponce said that cooperation should be strengthened with South America and Europe. He justified his statements, saying that "the USG will understand this, just as it understands that the GOE will not renew the Manta FOL agreement."

[1](#)3. (C) On April 20, Ponce stated that a review of whether or not to maintain various agreements with the USG was neither a "demonization" of cooperation with the U.S. nor in opposition to the country, but was instead a matter of sovereignty, and that it was necessary to think of alternatives to the relationship to avoid dependence. The press reported that Ponce also indicated that it was in this spirit that the visit of SOUTHCOM Commander Admiral Stavridis' visit was canceled, although Ponce privately told the Ambassador he would like it to be rescheduled (Ref C).

[1](#)4. (C) As part of his plan to restructure the Defense Ministry (Ref B), the MOD called for a commission to work in

conjunction with the Constituent Assembly, which would conduct an assessment of intelligence services and investigate alleged participation of the CIA in military intelligence, and make recommendations based on these results, with the goal of creating a more civilian-controlled institution. No one has yet been named, however, to participate in this commission. It remains to be seen when the commission will be formed and how active a role it will play.

What Will Be the Next Shoe to Drop?

15. (S/NF) After recent leadership changes, the military and police appear to be nervous about what will come next. We have seen evidence that some groups and individuals are using this opportunity to seek to settle the score with long time rivals. For example, some within the GOE who were previously associated with the leftist subversive group "Alfaro Vive, Carajo!" (AVC), which was stamped out in the 1980s, may be seeking payback against those that worked against the group.

Experience So Far on the Ground

16. (C) The changes we have seen so far in our military and law enforcement cooperation have not been anywhere near as drastic as one would expect based on the rhetoric. The Military Group's contacts in the Ecuadorian military showed an initial reluctance to engage and cancelled participation in some cooperation programs, such as training in the U.S. However, personal relations have now returned to normal levels and many Ecuadorian military leaders still remain eager to work with the United States. Over the past couple of weeks, senior field commanders have reached out to our Military Group for additional assistance to support the increased tempo of operations against the FARC in the Northern Border area. The Ecuadorian Army has decided to retain General Fabian Narvaez, a close partner of the USG and proponent of increased operations against the FARC, as Fourth Division Commander for another 14 months. Substantial Military Group assistance programs continue throughout the Northern Border region. Other USG agencies, such as DEA, NAS and USAID, have thus far not experienced difficulties with their Ecuadorian counterparts.

Comment

17. (C) It appears GOE officials are not seeking to end their relationship with U.S. military and law enforcement officials, just to balance it -- the same mantra of reduced dependency and more diversification that we hear from them on other issues, like trade. MOD Ponce told the Ambassador on April 17 that he did not want to stop all existing cooperation, but rather to reassess the overall relationship (Ref C). Many of the new leadership figures in the military and police are people with whom we have long-standing positive relations. Some are clearly frustrated at the civilian leadership's scattershot approach to change, marked by false starts, unpredictability and lack of follow-through. For now, our approach is to continue our existing programs until or unless our Ecuadorian counterparts tell us otherwise, as long as they serve USG interests.

Jewell